

Testimony in support of LD 2007, An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations

From: Deborah E. Bicknell, 268 Sisquisic Trail Yarmouth, Maine 04096

Dear Senator Carney, and Distinguished Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Deborah Bicknell and I currently live in Yarmouth. I was born in Maine, and I have a deep commitment to the well-being of Maine and to all who live, love and work here. I was raised by a multi-generational family who instilled the importance of care for community, and care for others, as some of the most important values to live by. I come from several generations of people living, working and caring for communities in Maine and it is through my deep sense of the importance of living my values that I am writing to testify in support of LD 2007. Thank you for receiving my testimony.

There was an old saying which states "so goes Maine, so goes the Nation." This of course had to do with Maine's relationship to being a sort of bellwether in political elections. For many this saying also applies to Maine and Mainers tending toward creativity and innovation in many sectors long before other states. I often feel as a Mainer this is true, and I see evidence of our creativity and ingenuity daily. I wish however I could say that this rooted and clear forethought applied to us here in Maine in terms of issues of tribal sovereignty, but I cannot. Rising from restrictions imposed by the *1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act (MICSA)*, Wabanaki Nations have been kept from achieving the significant economic growth experienced by the other 570 federal tribes over the past 40 years and we as a state have allowed the past to predict and create a difficult and unnecessary present. We have not been a leader, rather have allowed the past to restrict what is possible. Passing LD 2007 will help to ease the Settlement Act's restrictions thus allowing Wabanaki Nations to take full advantage of federal self-determination policies that are benefiting 570 other tribes and nearby communities across the country. LD 2007 is not about looking backwards however; it is about doing what is best and right now. The passing of LD 2007 will offer Wabanaki Nations access to valuable resources which will allow for more economic viability and overall community health and well-being. These resources and access to federal programs which Maine tribes have been cut off from for years will not only benefit and support Wabanaki people, but will also contribute to a thriving Maine. We are, at our core, interdependent, and thus when some of us thrive, all of us also do.

Wabanaki peoples and communities are the original peoples of Maine. We are lucky to share this land and to have the opportunity to learn from one another and to grow together. Sovereignty and self-determination are at the heart of what all human beings yearn for and is a basic human right; it is also at the core of Maine values.

Please support LD 2007 and Wabanaki sovereignty. It is a moment whose time has truly come, and as the people of this State it is our time to meet this moment with the passing of LD 2007. Please do just that.

Thank you for reading my testimony and for your public service.

Respectfully,

Deborah E. Bicknell